

# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

## ELECTION COMMISSION

### **ELECTION CYCLE PROJECT PLAN**

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#### **A CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER PROJECT**

**BRIAN LEACH, DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

**CHRIS WHITMIRE, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INFORMATION & TRAINING**

**FEBRUARY 2015**



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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

On the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in each even-numbered year, election officials across the United States oversee one of the most complex and consequential single-day events known to man. General Elections in the United States are nearly unmatched in scale and complexity, rivaled only by India's Parliamentary Election, which boasts a staggering 800 million eligible voters casting ballots on nine election days spread over six weeks.<sup>1</sup> Here in the U.S., approximately 300 million registered voters are eligible to vote, with the majority of those casting ballots on a single day at more than 175,000 polling places.<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of thousands of election officials coordinate their efforts, overseeing the process and counting votes with nothing less than the leadership of the free world at stake.

Here in South Carolina, the complexity, scale and consequences are relative; and the uniqueness of the event is unmatched within the bounds of the state. Approximately 2.8 million registered voters have the opportunity to vote at more than 2,200 precincts – a process overseen by approximately 20,000 poll managers and election officials. More amazingly, the General Election is only one of as many as five statewide elections that can be held within the election year.<sup>3</sup> But as massive as these events

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<sup>1</sup> "India's Jaw-dropping Election No Picnic | The Herald." *The Herald*. N.p., 24 Apr. 2014. Web. 30 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.herald.co.zw/indias-jaw-dropping-election-no-picnic/>>.

<sup>2</sup> *2012 Election Administration and Voting Survey*. Rep. Washington, DC: Election Assistance Commission, 2013. Web.

<sup>3</sup> There are five potential statewide elections in a Presidential election year: Democratic Presidential Preference Primary (PPP), Republican PPP, State Primaries, State Runoffs, and General Election.



are, citizens only know what they see of elections – candidates, polling places and results. Unknown and unappreciated by most is the enormous amount of planning and work necessary throughout the election cycle to conduct successful elections.

## **1.2 The SEC's Role in Elections**

The mission of the State Election Commission (SEC) is to ensure every eligible citizen has the opportunity to register to vote, participate in fair and impartial elections, and have the assurance that their votes will count. The agency has five core functions related to that mission: 1) supporting the statewide voting system; 2) supporting the statewide voter registration system; 3) overseeing the candidate filing process; 4) conducting a training and certification program for election officials; and the newest function, 5) supervising the conduct of elections by county voter registration and elections offices (county offices). The SEC has a staff of about 20 employees, meaning most of the heavy lifting in the conduct of elections is done by county offices. County offices prepare and deploy the voting system, are the main users of the statewide voter registration system, conduct local candidate filing, and are certified through the training and certification program.

The supervision of county offices is a new function, brought about by Act 196 of 2014.<sup>4</sup> Prior to Act 196, the SEC served in an advisory capacity to county offices, but had no supervisory authority. County offices operated independently, to a large extent, from other county offices and the SEC. While most county offices generally followed SEC guidance, policies and procedures; the agency had no authority to

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<sup>4</sup> Act of the S.C. General Assembly, S\*0815 (Rat #220, Act #196 of 2014), By L. Martin and Campsen

compel compliance. The structure prior to Act 196 lent itself to misconceptions of legal requirements and resulted in variances in business practices by many county offices throughout the state. The SEC now has a mandate to ensure all county offices are compliant with federal and state law and SEC policies and procedures.

**New Agency Supervisory Responsibilities under Act 196:**

- Conduct reviews, audits, or other post-election analysis
- The SEC must step in to supervise and assist if the county IF:
  - County fails to comply with state or federal law or policies and procedures
  - Board does not or cannot determine and certify results of an election
- In such case, the SEC would:
  - Identify failure(s)
  - Establish and implement plan to correct
  - SEC and boards must work together (in good faith) to remedy failure
- If differences of policy or opinion, SEC policy or opinion controls
- If board member, director or staff negligently failed to comply
  - May order decertification/retraining
  - If failure was willful, may recommend termination (directors and staff) or removal by Governor (board members).
- If board can't certify by time set for certification, SEC can certify for county

## **1.3 The Project**

The SEC recognizes that auditing after an election is only half the solution. The SEC must work proactively with county offices throughout the election cycle to prevent failures. The biggest obstacle to this is ensuring everyone is aware of what they should be doing and how they should be doing it. This obstacle manifests itself in

two ways: 1) the task owner has a misconception about a task, or the individual is unaware of the task. Misconceptions come from various sources: institutional misinformation shared within the organization or handed down from prior employees, misunderstanding of the reading of policies and procedures, and the adherence to local practices due to a “that’s the way we do it here” mentality. In many cases though, task owners may simply be unaware of the guiding laws, policies and procedures due to nonexistent or hard-to-find documentation. This results in the task not being done or being done wrong. This has been a significant problem with new directors.

In this project, the team set out to alleviate these problems by researching and developing a comprehensive Election Cycle Project Plan. The project team consisted of Brian Leach, Information Technology Director, and Chris Whitmire, Director of Public Information and Training. Our goal was to start with existing SEC and county office procedures (documented and undocumented), identify and correct any inaccuracies and inconsistencies, identify improvements, and compile those existing tasks and improvements into a single election cycle project plan, using a Gantt Matrix style project management tool. The idea was to gather the scattered guidance into an accessible, usable, comprehensive document that can be used to get election officials on the same page and to provide a resource for the onboarding of new directors.



## **1.4 Summary**

The conduct of a statewide election is an enormous project and, therefore, requires long-term planning, massive coordination and uniform application of complicated policies and procedures. Previously, there was no central authority to be held accountable for project failures. While the SEC has always assumed some responsibility in an advisory role, the agency now has the clear authority and responsibility to establish the uniformity and consistency in application of election laws, policies and procedures necessary for successful elections. Developing and implementing an Election Cycle Project Plan (ECPP) will be a significant step toward achieving that goal.

## **2. Gap Analysis**

### **2.1 Current State**

#### **Inconsistent Business Practices**

Variances in the way county offices perform tasks are currently having a negative impact on the SEC's mission. Those variances can be fit into four basic categories:

- Not knowing what should be done
- Not knowing when it should be done
- Not knowing who should do it
- Not knowing how it should be done

In many cases, some county offices simply don't know that a certain task needs to be done. Even if what needs to be done is known, the preferred or required timeframe

for doing it may not be known. Since many responsibilities are shared between the SEC and county offices, there is potential for confusion over ownership of known tasks. In other words, the supposed owner may know that a task needs to be done by a certain date but may assume someone else is doing it. And finally, even when the task is known, and the timeframe and owner is clear, there can be confusion over the process by which the task should be completed.

For example, a director of a county office may not know that candidate statuses must be updated in the Voter Registration and Election Management System after the Statewide Primary. Even if they know this must be done, they may not know that it needs to be done immediately upon certification of the Primary. Even if the director knows that, they may believe that it's done by the SEC. And even in the cases where the director is fully aware of the task, the deadline, and the ownership; they may simply update the candidate statuses in the wrong way. The result can be failure of several systems: online candidate tracking, online runoff ballots for military and overseas citizens, and errors in election database production for the Runoff.

The project team conducted a survey of all 46 county offices in December asking questions about current practices related to timeframes and deadlines of key election preparation tasks. Responses showed significant differences in when counties were beginning work on certain tasks and when they thought they should be complete.<sup>5</sup>

For example, when asked, "How many days prior to a statewide election do you begin verifying the availability of your polling places," responses ranged from 60 days to 120 days. While 120 days seems reasonable, it was concerning that some

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix C – December 2014 County Survey Results

counties thought it was acceptable to wait until two months prior to a statewide election to begin the process of verifying that they had a place to hold that election. This would leave little time to address any issues with availability discovered through this verification process. Other responses were equally as scattered and raised similar concerns.

### **Impact of inconsistent business practices**

Ultimately, variations in business practices have a negative impact on the Agency mission to ensure every eligible citizen has the opportunity to register to vote, participate in fair and impartial elections, and have the assurance that their votes will count.

For example, in the 2014 General Election, poor planning and execution of election database testing and voting machine preparation in one county lead to some ballot styles being missing in some of the county's precincts. This meant some offices for which voters in those precincts were eligible to vote were excluded from their ballots. Disenfranchisement is mission failure. This failure could have been avoided had the county office planned better and spent the time to completely test the election database.

Not all inconsistencies lead to mission failure but still have a costly impact. Any task failure can have a cumulative effect. It not only affects the current task, but the initial task may delay or prevent completion of subsequent task, and so on.

Many SEC and county staff hours are spent trying to mitigate task failures throughout the election year. SEC staff invests resources trying to make sure county offices are aware of tasks and deadlines as they arise. This doesn't always work resulting in



more hours spent putting out the fires caused by the task failures. County offices also spend time going back to correct those same mistakes. Not only does the SEC find itself putting out fires that could have been avoided, but many times, the same problems are occurring simultaneously in multiple counties. This leads to SEC staff answering many of the same questions and dealing with many of the same problems over, and over, again.

Without clear expectations, it will be difficult for the SEC to fulfill its new audit and supervisory obligations under Act 196. The agency can't hold a county responsible for performing a certain task on time if the county hasn't been informed of the requirement. While many tasks are documented and measurable, many are not.

Failures can also lead to election protests and appeals and lawsuits. Conducting protest and appeal hearings are costly in time and resources. A hearing on one protest can involve dozens of people and last for a whole day. Protest decisions can then be appealed to the SEC and ultimately the Supreme Court. County and state election staffs, county attorneys, and the courts spend numerous hours throughout that process. Candidates themselves also incur costs in attorney's fees and court fees. Similar costs can be incurred when an election office faces other legal action over failures in the election process.

Failures in the election process lead to poor public perception and loss of voter confidence. While failures that lead to disenfranchisement have an obvious negative impact on public perception, inefficiencies and mismanagement erode at voter confidence as well. The voters' perception of whether an election is fair and impartial and that their votes counted is equally as important as actually doing those things. If

we run a perfect election, but no one believes the results are fair and accurate, we've failed in our mission.

In some cases, task failures can lead to criminal investigations by county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. There are criminal offenses associated with state and federal election laws. When an election official fails to do certain things, whether intentional or not, it can raise questions in the minds of those affected by the failure as to whether it is an attempt to manipulate the system. When a criminal complaint is filed, county and state election officials can spend hours providing information to investigators. Even when investigators conclude there was no criminal wrongdoing, the damage to the public perception of the office is done and can persist for some time.

### **Causes of Inconsistent Business Practices**

Project team members worked to identify the major causes of variations in our business practices by looking at the resources currently available. Going into the project, we recognized that one of those causes would be that in many cases, guidance on tasks is scattered and hard-to-find. While having documented guidance and requirements is good, it is equally as important for them to be organized, usable, and readily available for the end users.

The current baseline document is the Election Calendar – a collection of important dates, time periods, and deadlines associated with the general election year.<sup>6</sup> Many counties use this calendar as a guide throughout the process and is the only document currently in use that resembles a project plan. While valuable, the Election

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<sup>6</sup> Appendix B – 2014 Election Calendar

Calendar has its shortcomings. One issue is that the election calendar is too general, intended to be used by various role players in the process: the SEC, county offices, political parties, candidates, voters, media, and the general public. This multi-purpose document leads to exclusion of important internal dates and deadlines. Another issue is that the document contains mostly deadlines. While those are very important, it provides no guidance on when work should begin to meet those deadlines. And lastly, the Election Calendar is simply missing too much. Numerous mission critical tasks are simply not included.

In addition to the Election Calendar, the project team found additional, critical guidance scattered amongst the following available documentation:

- Special Election Calendars
- Unity Election Database Calendar
- Voter Services Division – 2014 Timeline
- Voter Registration and Election Commission Handbook
- SEC Procedures for Conducting Partisan Candidate Filing
- SEC Election Memos to County Offices
- ElectionNET Posts (an SEC intranet site for county offices)
- Election Preparation and Results Accumulation Guide
- S.C. Code of Laws & S.C. Constitution
- S.C. Attorney General's Opinions
- Federal Laws – U.S. Constitution, Voting Rights Act, National Voter Registration Act, Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act

In addition to the scattered and hard-to-find documentation, the team found that many of the procedures, timeframes, and deadlines in current use are simply not documented. Undocumented procedures exist as institutional knowledge within the organization, both at the SEC and county offices. Institutional knowledge is not



always correct. Many times it can be based on misinformation and misconceptions of existing requirements. Since institutional knowledge is stored in the organization's human resources, and not documented, it can suffer from morphing over time. Incremental changes in the way a person does something extrapolated over a period of time can result in a drastic departure from the previously understood business requirements. The result can be the opposite of institutional knowledge – institutional misinformation. Efforts to correct institutional misinformation can be difficult because the task owners believe they're doing it right. And even when the institutional knowledge is correct, it is always at risk of being lost with staff turnover.

Turnover in county election offices is a major concern in South Carolina elections. Leading up to the 2014 General Election, 14 of 46 county directors could be considered "new" (in the position for no more than one General Election). Nearly one-third of the people responsible for ensuring the statewide election was conducted properly had little to no experience. A new county director is faced with an enormous task, both learning and performing the job simultaneously with little room to make mistakes. With the lack of any comprehensive onboarding documentation, the new director is faced with trying to sort through the scattered guiding documents to find the answers on what to do and when to do it. Other county directors can be a good resource for a new director, but the risk is the transfer of institutional misinformation from the other organization. In addition, SEC staff spends many hours working closely with new directors to ensure they meet their responsibilities.

## **2.2 Desired State**

The SEC desires a state in which we are confident that everyone involved in the massive undertaking of conducting an election is doing what is necessary to accomplish the agency's mission in the most efficient way possible. Everyone should know what needs to be done, when it should be done, who is responsible for doing it, and how to do it correctly.

### **Key factors in the desired state:**

- Ensure adherence to state and federal law and SEC policies and procedures
- Set a baseline for operation that is auditable
- Increase efficiency
- Increase accountability
- Have confidence the knowledge and abilities in county offices to accomplish the tasks
- Eliminate local practices that conflict with state and federal law and SEC policies and procedures
- Adopt good local practices and share with other county offices
- Prevent loss of institutional knowledge
- Reduction or elimination of mistakes
- Provide new directors with better resources
- Reduction of SEC staff time spent bringing new directors up to speed
- Reduction of SEC staff time spent correcting mistakes
- Reduction of the tedious task of answering repetitive questions from county offices
- Eliminate costly protests, lawsuits, and criminal investigations
- Improve public confidence in elections

## **2.3 Proposed Solution**

We set out to close the gap by researching and developing a comprehensive Election Cycle Project Plan (ECPP). Our goal was to start with existing SEC and county office procedures (documented and undocumented), identify and correct any inaccuracies

and inconsistencies, identify improvements, and compile those existing tasks and improvements into a single election cycle project plan, using a Gantt Matrix style project management tool. Scattered guidance, good local practices, and institutional knowledge would be brought together in an accessible, usable, comprehensive document. The document would be used to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and SEC policies and procedures by getting current election officials on the same page and providing an invaluable resource for the onboarding of new directors. The ECPP would help the SEC meet its new auditing and supervisory obligations by providing counties with a clear baseline of operation.

The team decided to limit the scope of the ECPP to addressing what should be done, when it should be done and by whom; but it would not necessarily address the how it should be done. Having someone know what they have to do and when they have to do it solves half the problem. We determined that compiling all the step-by-step documentation of exactly how each task is done should be another project. Ultimately, the specific laws, policies and procedures related to each task will need to be addressed to fully close the gap (see Section 4 - Future Application).

### **3. Developing the Project Plan**

#### **Step 1 – Selection of Project Management Tool**

The project management tool is the platform on which the ECPP was built. For the purposes of this project, we wanted a tool that would allow for multi-level tasks, multiple task owners, start and end dates, start and end times, and a Gantt chart graphical display. We researched both open-source and commercially available products. We found that, as with



most technology, there is a trade-off between functionality and usability. In other words, the more features the tool has, the harder it is to implement and use. We focused on finding the tool that would allow us to simply record the tasks, periods, deadlines, and owners, while also producing a Gantt chart. We found a free, Excel-based project management template available for download online that met our needs.<sup>7</sup>

### **Step 2 – Modification of Project Management Tool**

Modifications to the template were necessary to meet our needs. The key change was adding beginning and ending times to the existing beginning and ending dates. Unlike many large scale projects that are planned using days, elections additionally require times at which tasks must begin or end. The chart also had additional functionalities that did not meet our needs. For example, there were formulas included that calculated the number of days in a task that did not take into account our specific start and end times. These calculations resulted in inaccuracies and were removed from the tool.

### **Step 3 – Integration of Baseline Document**

The next step was to integrate the 2014 Election Calendar into the template forming the nexus of the ECPP. Instead of building a generic plan, we decided to use real 2016 Election dates and deadlines so that the plan would have immediate value. During this step, the laws and policies defining each date and deadline were researched and applied to the 2016 calendar. We were careful to expand as many of the existing dates and deadlines into time periods by determining dates on which tasks should begin. For example, the Election Calendar included the deadline to register to vote for the Primary (May 14, 2016), but that does not tell the new director when to expect the flood of pre-election voter registration applications. We established the “Peak VR period for Primary” of April 14, 2016, through the May 14 deadline. While integrating the Election Calendar, we began to organize the tasks

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<sup>7</sup> Hu, Wei. *My Simple Excel Gantt Chart Template*. N.p.: Wei Hu, n.d. .xls. <http://wei-hu-tw.blogspot.com/2011/07/my-simple-excel-gantt-chart-template.html>

into what eventually became seven main, Level 1 categories. Within each category are Level 2 and Level 3 tasks.

### **Step 4 – Surveyed County Offices and Integrated Results**

The survey asked 22 questions related to the timeframes during which certain tasks were done (see Appendix C). The survey was distributed to 46 counties. Twenty-one counties responded. Most questions asked the county office to provide the number of days prior to a certain event that work on the associated task began. Because we did not want to limit responses to what we found reasonable, response fields were left open as free text. Responses to most questions varied greatly. We then applied a data normalization process to help us better analyze the data. For each question, we looked at the varying responses and identified a set of normalized responses in which each original response could be recategorized. Statistical outliers as well as responses within the normal range were placed into the most closely matching category. This allowed us to quantify responses and better judge them against one another. During this process, we determined that five of the original survey questions were out of scope of the project and were eliminated from the results.

We then looked at the most common response for each question and determined if the suggested time frame made sense according to our knowledge, experience, and existing Election Calendar. In most cases the common response was incorporated into the ECPP. In some cases, we found that the most common response was problematic. In those cases, we considered the next most common response that worked and incorporated that time frame into the ECPP.

### **Step 5 – County Review of Draft ECPP**

Copies of the ECPP were distributed to 10 county election directors for review. County directors provided some feedback, and all agreed that it would be a valuable resource for county directors, especially new directors. The York County Voter Registration and Elections

Office was particularly helpful by incorporating their local planning document and institutional knowledge into a copy of the ECPP. After review and discussion, new tasks were added to the ECPP and date ranges adjusted.

#### **Step 6 – Incorporation of Scattered SEC Documentation & Staff Interviews**

We then gathered and reviewed all other SEC documents that contained tasks, dates, and deadlines. As we reviewed those documents, we brought in appropriate SEC staff for interviews. Interviews consisted of going over pertinent portions of the ECPP to incorporate other documents and the subject matter expertise of the staff member. Aside from the team members, five additional SEC staff members were interviewed.

#### **Result – The Election Cycle Project Plan**

The result of the effort is the Election Cycle Project Plan in Appendix A. The chart below shows the ECPP with a nearly 400% increase of the number of tasks, deadlines, and periods in the Election Calendar. In addition to an increase in the raw number of tasks from the old baseline document to the new document, the ECPP now contains a higher percentage of time periods. The Election Calendar had only three time periods, or 8% of the total tasks in the document. The ECPP now contains 118 periods, or 61% of the tasks in the document.

	Election Calendar	ECPP	Percent Increase
Total number of tasks	39	194	397%
Number of deadlines	32	52	63%
Number of time periods	3	118	3,930%

## **4. Future Application**

The ECPP is a vast improvement and can be implemented in its current form to help close the performance gap. However, before future application, the SEC should continue to define additional tasks and continue to validate the ECPP through SEC staff and county office reviews. When complete, the ECPP will be the baseline document for the SEC Field Audit



Program. The SEC should consider incorporating the tasks defined in the ECPP into a more robust online, project management application with the following functionalities:

- Dashboard
- Automated reminders
- Links to associated laws, policies, procedures
- Task dependencies (one task begins when the other is completed)
- Task classifications: guideline vs. requirement, importance levels
- Ability to easily transfer task dates and times to future years

Once fully realized, the ECPP will be the cornerstone of the Agency's efforts to meet its county supervisory obligations.

## 5. Appendices

### 5.1 Appendix A – Election Cycle Project Plan

Election Cycle Project Plan					
		Lead:	Brian Leach & Chris Whitmire		
		Start Date:	9/1/2015	Tuesday	
		Today's Date:	2/1/2015	Sunday	
		(vertical red line)			
WBS	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	End	Start Time
1	Absentee (ABS) Voting		1/01/16	11/08/16	
1.1	Absentee Precincts Open for 2016	County	1/01/16	1/01/16	
1.2	Period for Primary ABS Voting	County	1/01/16	6/28/16	
1.2.1	Period for preparing generic ABS mail packages	County	2/28/16	4/30/16	
1.2.2	Deadline for SEC to provide Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) Ballots to county	SEC	4/15/16	4/15/16	
1.2.2	Deadline to send Primary UOCAVA ballots	County	4/30/16	4/30/16	
1.2.3	Period for Primary in-person ABS voting	County	5/16/16	6/13/16	5:00 PM
1.2.3.1	Period to post notice of satellite ABS location (at least one week prior to opening)	County	5/09/16	5/22/16	
1.2.4	Period for peak Primary/Runoff ABS voting	County	5/24/16	6/27/16	
1.2.5	Deadline to accept Primary ABS by mail apps	County	6/10/16	6/10/16	5:00 PM
1.2.6	Deadline to accept Primary ABS by mail ballots	County	6/14/16	6/14/16	7:00 PM
1.2.7	Deadline to accept Runoff ABS by mail apps	County	6/24/16	6/24/16	5:00 PM
1.2.8	Deadline for Runoff in-person ABS voting	County	6/27/16	6/27/16	5:00 PM
1.2.9	Deadline to accept Runoff ABS by mail ballots	County	6/28/16	6/28/16	7:00 PM
1.3	Period for GE ABS Voting	County	1/01/16	11/08/16	

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1.3.1	Period for preparing generic ABS mail packages	County	7/24/16	9/24/16		
1.3.2	Deadline to send GE UOCAVA ballots	County	9/24/16	9/24/16		
1.3.3	Period for GE in-person ABS voting	County	10/10/16	11/07/16		5:00 PM
1.3.3.1	Period to post notice of satellite ABS location (at least one week prior to opening)	County	10/03/16	10/16/16		
1.3.4	Period for peak GE ABS voting	County	10/18/16	11/07/16		
1.3.5	Deadline to accept GE ABS by mail apps	County	11/04/16	11/04/16		5:00 PM
1.3.6	Deadline to accept GE ABS by mail ballots	County	11/08/16	11/08/16		7:00 PM
<b>2</b>	<b>Voter Registration (VR)</b>		9/22/15	10/08/16		
2.1	First day for 17 year olds who turn 18 on or before November 8, 2016 (based on 2/20/16 PPP)	County	9/22/15	9/22/15		
2.2	Peak VR period for Primary	County	4/14/16	5/14/16		
2.3	Deadline to register to vote for Primaries	County	5/14/16	5/14/16		
2.4	Deadline for county to update voter information in VREMS prior to print of Primary VR list	County	6/03/16	6/03/16		5:00 PM
2.5	Period to print, pack and ship Primary VR list	SEC	6/03/16	6/06/16	5:00 PM	5:00 PM
2.6	Primary EVRL Laptop Prep	County	6/01/16	6/10/16		
2.6.1	Primary EVRL voter file available for download		6/04/16	6/04/16		
2.6.2	Primary EVRL voter update file available for download		6/10/16	6/10/16		
2.7	Period to manually mark Primary paper VR list with ABS voters who voted 6/4 - 6/13	County	6/08/16	6/14/16		
2.8	Peak VR period for GE	County	9/08/16	10/08/16		
2.9	Deadline to register to voter for GE	County	10/08/16	10/08/16		
2.10	Deadline for county to update voter information in VREMS prior to print of GE VR list	County	10/28/16	10/28/16		5:00 PM
2.11	Period to print, pack and ship GE VR list	SEC	10/28/16	10/31/16	5:00 PM	5:00 PM
2.12	Primary EVRL Laptop Prep	County	10/26/16	11/04/16		
2.12.1	Primary EVRL voter file available for download		10/29/16	10/29/16		
2.12.2	Primary EVRL voter update file available for download		11/04/16	11/04/16		
2.13	Period to manually mark GE paper VR list with ABS voters who voted 10/29 - 11/7	County	11/02/16	11/08/16		
<b>3</b>	<b>Candidate Filing and Certification</b>		10/15/15	8/15/16		
3.1	Partisan Candidate Filing	Both	10/15/15	8/15/16		
3.1.1	Period for establishing filing fees	SEC	10/15/15	1/07/16		
3.1.1.1	Period for SEC to confirm partisan office salaries with county administrators and enter in VREMS	SEC	10/15/15	12/15/15		



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3.1.1.2	Period for county to confirm that all partisan offices have filing fees established in VREMS (Report 149)	SEC	12/15/15	12/31/15		
3.1.1.3	Period to post partisan filing fees on SCVOTES.org	SEC	1/01/16	1/07/16		
3.1.2	Period for establishing GE offices in VREMS	Both	1/01/16	2/01/16		
3.1.3	Period for SEC to provide template for Public Notice of Filing	SEC	1/25/16	2/01/16		
3.1.4	Period for county to contact county parties to review candidate filing and certification process	County	2/01/16	2/28/16		
3.1.5	Deadline for county to submit request to establish VREMS Candidate Filing privileges	Both	3/01/16	3/01/16		
3.1.6	Date on which Notice of Filing must be published	Both	3/02/16	3/02/16		
3.1.7	March Filing period for partisan candidates	Both	3/16/16	3/30/16	12:00 PM	12:00 PM
3.1.8	Period for county and SEC to verify accuracy of candidate filing information (daily)	Both	3/16/16	4/01/16	12:00 PM	12:00 PM
3.1.9	Period for county and SEC to send parties filing fee checks, SICPP forms, filing fee receipts, and filing fee report (Report 148)	Both	3/30/16	4/01/16	12:00 PM	12:00 PM
3.1.10	Period for parties to certify candidates for Primary and deliver filing fee check to SEC	Both	3/30/16	4/05/16	12:00 PM	12:00 PM
3.1.11	Period to update post Primary candidate statuses VREMS	Both	6/18/16	6/20/16		
3.1.12	Period to update post Runoff candidate statuses VREMS	Both	7/02/16	7/04/16		
3.1.13	Period for parties to certify candidates for GE	Both	8/01/16	8/15/16		12:00 PM
3.2	Petition Candidate Filing	Both	6/15/16	8/15/16		
3.2.1	Period for accepting candidate petitions	Both	6/15/16	7/15/16		12:00 PM
3.2.2	Period for checking candidate petitions	Both	6/15/16	8/15/16		12:00 PM
3.2.3	Deadline to certify petition candidates	Both	8/15/16	8/15/16		12:00 PM
3.3	Nonpartisan Candidate Filing & Questions	Both	6/15/16	8/15/16		
3.3.1	Period for certifying nonpartisan candidates and questions for GE	Both	7/15/16	8/15/16		12:00 PM
3.4	Period to verify ALL candidate statuses in VREMS	Both	8/08/16	8/15/16		12:00 PM
3.5	Period to update post GE candidate statuses in VREMS	Both	11/18/16	11/21/16		
4	<b>Primary Administration</b>		2/01/16	7/09/16		
4.1	Primary supplies	Both	2/01/16	4/30/16		
4.1.1	Period for SEC to send Supply Inventory and Order Form	SEC	2/01/16	2/07/16		
4.1.2	Deadline for county to return Supply Inventory and Order Form	County	2/15/16	2/15/16		
4.1.3	Period for SEC to ship Primary supplies	SEC	4/21/16	4/30/16		

# Election Cycle Project Plan

4.2	Publish Public Notices of Primary	Both	3/07/16	4/29/16		
4.2.1	Period for SEC to provide template for Public Notice of Primary	SEC	3/07/16	3/14/16		
4.2.2	Period to publish first Public Notice of Primary	County	3/15/16	4/15/16		
4.2.3	Period to publish second Notice of Primary (must be exactly two weeks after first)	County	3/29/16	4/29/16		
4.3	Deadline to make Primary sample ballot available on SCVOTES	SEC	4/06/16	4/06/16		
4.4	Primary Workshop	Both	4/28/16	4/28/16		
4.5	Primary Canvass & Certification	Both	6/14/16	6/18/16		
4.5.1	Period to upload unofficial results to Election Night Results Reporting (ENR)	County	6/14/16	6/14/16	7:00 PM	11:59 PM
4.5.2	Deadline to upload pre-certification audit data	County	6/15/16	6/15/16	11:00 AM	11:00 AM
4.5.3	Deadline to complete pre-certification audit	SEC	6/16/16	6/16/16	9:00 AM	9:00 AM
4.5.4	Period to research provisional ballots in prep for hearing	County	6/15/16	6/15/16		
4.5.5	County board holds Primary provisional ballot and certification hearings	County	6/16/16	6/16/16	9:00 AM	1:00 PM
4.5.6	Deadline to upload official results to ENR and upload post certification audit data	County	6/16/16	6/16/16	2:00 PM	2:00 PM
4.5.7	Period to enter Primary provisional ballots in VREMS	County	6/16/16	6/17/16	1:00 PM	5:00 PM
4.5.8	Deadline to complete post certification audit	SEC	6/17/16	6/17/16	5:00 PM	5:00 PM
4.5.9	SEC holds Primary certification hearing	SEC	6/18/16	6/18/16	9:00 AM	12:00 PM
4.5.10	Deadline to update Primary ENR results to official	SEC	6/18/16	6/18/16	5:00 PM	5:00 PM
4.5.11	Deadline to post Primary audit data and reports to SCVOTES	SEC	6/23/16	6/23/16		
4.6	Deadline to make Runoff sample ballot available on SCVOTES	SEC	6/19/16	6/19/16		
4.7	Runoff Canvass & Certification		6/28/16	7/02/16		
4.7.1	Period to upload unofficial results to Election Night Results Reporting (ENR)	County	6/28/16	6/28/16	7:00 PM	11:59 PM
4.7.2	Deadline to upload pre-certification audit data	County	6/29/16	6/29/16	11:00 AM	11:00 AM
4.7.3	Deadline to complete pre-certification audit	SEC	6/30/16	6/30/16	9:00 AM	9:00 AM
4.7.4	Period to research provisional ballots in prep for hearing	County	6/29/16	6/29/16		
4.7.5	County board holds Runoff provisional ballot and certification hearings	County	6/30/16	6/30/16	9:00 AM	1:00 PM
4.7.6	Deadline to upload official results to ENR and upload post certification audit data	County	6/30/16	6/30/16	2:00 PM	2:00 PM
4.7.7	Period to enter Runoff provisional ballots in VREMS	County	6/30/16	7/01/16	1:00	5:00



# Election Cycle Project Plan

					PM	PM
4.7.8	Deadline to complete post certification audit	SEC	7/01/16	7/01/16	5:00 PM	5:00 PM
4.7.9	SEC holds Runoff certification hearing	SEC	7/02/16	7/02/16	9:00 AM	12:00 PM
4.7.10	Deadline to update Runoff ENR results to official	SEC	7/02/16	7/02/16	5:00 PM	5:00 PM
4.7.11	Deadline to post Runoff audit data and reports to SCVOTES	SEC	7/07/16	7/07/16		
4.8	Deadline to establish Runoff in VREMS	SEC	6/18/16	6/18/16		
4.9	Period for submission of Primary reimbursement requests	County	6/15/16	7/14/16		
4.10	Period for submission of Runoff reimbursement requests	County	6/29/16	7/28/16		
4.11	Primary protests and appeals	Both				
4.11.1	Period for filing Primary protests	Both	6/16/16	6/20/16		12:00 PM
4.11.2	Party holds Primary protest hearings	Both	6/23/16	6/23/16		
4.11.3	Period for filing Primary appeal with state party	Both	6/23/16	6/24/16		3:00 PM
4.11.4	Period for state party to hear Primary appeals	Both	6/24/16	6/25/16		12:00 PM
4.11.5	Period for filing Runoff protests	Both	6/30/16	7/04/16		12:00 PM
4.11.6	Party holds Runoff protest hearings	Both	7/07/16	7/07/16		
4.11.7	Period for filing Runoff appeal with state party	Both	7/07/16	7/08/16		3:00 PM
4.11.8	Period for state party to hear Runoff appeals	Both	7/08/16	7/09/16		12:00 PM
4.11.9	Period for party to submit court reporter expense reimbursement request	SEC	6/24/16	7/15/16		
<b>5</b>	<b>General Election (GE) Administration</b>		7/01/16	12/18/16		
5.1	GE supplies	Both	7/01/16	9/24/16		
5.1.1	Period for SEC to send Supply Inventory and Order Form	SEC	7/01/16	7/07/16		
5.1.2	Deadline for county to return Supply Inventory and Order Form	County	7/15/16	7/15/16		
5.1.3	Period for SEC to ship GE supplies	SEC	9/15/16	9/24/16		
5.2	Publish Public Notices of GE	SEC	8/01/16	9/23/16		
5.2.1	SEC Provides Template for Public Notice of GE	SEC	8/01/16	8/09/16		
5.2.2	Period to publish first Public Notice of GE	County	8/09/16	9/09/16		
5.2.3	Period to publish second Notice of GE (must be exactly two weeks after first)	County	8/23/16	9/23/16		
5.3	Deadline to make GE sample ballot available on SCVOTES	SEC	8/16/16	8/16/16		
5.4	GE Workshop	Both	9/15/16	9/15/16		
5.5	GE Canvass & Certification	Both	11/11/16	11/18/16		
5.5.1	Period to upload unofficial results to Election Night Results Reporting (ENR)	County	11/08/16	11/08/16	7:00	11:59

# Election Cycle Project Plan

					PM	PM
5.5.2	Deadline to upload pre-certification audit data	County	11/09/16	11/09/16	11:00 AM	11:00 AM
5.5.3	Deadline to complete pre-certification audit	SEC	11/11/16	11/11/16	9:00 AM	9:00 AM
5.5.4	Period to research provisional ballots in prep for hearing	County	11/09/16	11/10/16		
5.5.5	County board holds GE provisional ballot and certification hearings	County	11/11/16	11/11/16	9:00 AM	1:00 PM
5.5.6	Deadline to upload official results to ENR and upload post certification audit data	County	11/11/16	11/11/16	2:00 PM	2:00 PM
5.5.7	Period to enter provisional ballots in VREMS	County	11/11/16	11/12/16	1:00 PM	5:00 PM
5.5.8	Deadline to complete post certification audit	SEC	11/17/16	11/17/16	5:00 PM	5:00 PM
5.5.9	SEC holds GE certification hearing	SEC	11/18/16	11/18/16		
5.5.10	Deadline to update GE ENR results to official	SEC	11/18/16	11/18/16	5:00 PM	5:00 PM
5.5.11	Deadline to post GE audit data and reports to SCVOTES	SEC	11/23/16	11/23/16		
5.6	Period for submission of GE reimbursement requests	County	11/09/16	12/08/16		
5.7	GE protests and appeals	Both	11/11/16	12/18/16		
5.7.1	Period for filing county-level GE protests	County	11/11/16	11/16/16		12:00 PM
5.7.2	County board holds GE protest hearings	County	11/21/16	11/21/16		
5.7.3	Period for filing state-level GE protests	SEC	11/18/16	11/23/16		12:00 PM
5.7.4	Period to appeal county board decision to SEC	SEC	11/21/16	11/28/16		12:00 PM
5.7.5	Period for SEC to hear GE appeals	SEC	11/22/16	12/12/16		12:00 PM
5.7.6	Period for SEC to hear GE protests	SEC	11/23/16	12/18/16		
<b>6</b>	<b>Poll Managers (PMs) and Polling Places (PPs)</b>		<b>1/01/16</b>	<b>5/14/16</b>		
6.1	Period for confirming availability of Primary PPs	County	1/01/16	2/28/16		
6.2	Period for reserving Primary and GE PM training locations	County	1/01/16	1/31/16		
6.3	Period for Primary PM recruitment	County	1/01/16	5/14/16		
6.3.1	Period for county to send returning PM retention letters	County	1/01/16	1/31/16		
6.3.2	Period to notify parties of opportunity to submit list of prospective PMs for Primary	County	1/01/16	1/31/16		
6.3.3	Deadline for parties to submit list of prospective PMs for Primary	County	4/30/16	4/30/16		
6.4	Deadline for SEC to provide election year PM Training PowerPoint update	SEC	3/01/16	3/01/16		
6.5	Period for setting up Primary PM training events VREMS	County	3/01/16	5/14/16		
6.6	Period for sending Primary PM training letter	County	4/01/16	5/14/16		



## Election Cycle Project Plan

6.7	Period for determining Primary voting machine allocation	County	4/01/16	4/15/16		
6.8	Period to assign training to Primary PMs in VREMS	County	4/01/16	6/13/16		
6.9	Period for Primary PM Training and PP Assignment	County	5/09/16	6/13/16		
6.10	Period for distribution of Primary voting machines and PP supplies	County	6/08/16	6/13/16		
6.11	Period for confirming availability of GE PPs	County	7/01/16	7/31/16		
6.12	Period for GE PM recruitment	County	7/01/16	10/08/16		
6.13	Period for setting up GE PM training events VREMS	County	8/01/16	10/08/16		
6.14	Period for sending GE PM training letter	County	8/25/16	10/08/16		
6.15	Period to assign training to GE PMs in VREMS	County	8/25/16	11/07/16		
6.16	Period for GE PM Training and PP assignment	County	10/03/16	11/07/16		
6.17	Period for distribution of GE voting machines and PP supplies	County	11/02/16	11/07/16		
<b>7</b>	<b>Ballot Production, Testing, and Prep</b>		<b>1/01/16</b>	<b>12/31/15</b>		
7.1	Period for Primary Decode and District Relations Verification	Both	1/01/16	2/28/16		
7.1.1	SEC sends county Decode and District Relations reports	SEC	1/25/16	2/01/16		
7.1.2	Deadline for counties to approve reports	County	2/26/16	2/26/16		
7.2	Period for SEC to build Primary database shells	SEC	2/01/16	3/11/16		
7.3	Period for SEC to add names and deliver Primary preliminary database	SEC	3/30/16	4/04/16		
7.4	Deadline for county to approve preliminary Primary database (within 48 hours of receipt)	County	4/06/16	4/06/16		
7.5	Period for SEC to complete Primary databases	SEC	4/01/16	4/20/16		
7.6	Deadline for counties to submit third-party Primary databases	SEC	4/18/16	4/18/16		
7.7	Period for county testing and approval of Primary database	County	4/10/16	4/25/16		
7.8	Period for SEC to send Primary ballot proofs to commercial printer	SEC	4/10/16	4/25/16		
7.9	Period for Primary PEB, flash card, and voting machine prep and testing	County	4/10/16	5/10/16		
7.10	Deadline to deploy in-office ABS voting machines (In-office ABS opens 5/16/2016)	County	5/13/16	5/13/16		
7.11	Period for SEC to complete Runoff databases	SEC	6/18/16	6/21/16		
7.12	Deadline for counties to submit third-party Runoff databases	SEC	6/21/16	6/21/16		
7.13	Period for county testing and approval of Runoff database	County	6/18/16	6/22/16		
7.14	Period for Runoff PEB, flash card, and voting machine prep and testing	County	6/20/16	6/25/16		
7.15	Deadline to deploy in-office ABS voting machines (In-office ABS opens 6/22/2016)	County	6/22/16	6/22/16		
7.16	Period for SEC to build GE database shells	SEC	7/01/16	8/15/16		
7.17	Period for SEC to add names and deliver GE preliminary database	SEC	8/15/16	8/20/16		
7.18	Deadline for county to approve preliminary GE database (within 48 hours of receipt)	County	8/22/16	8/22/16		
7.19	Period for SEC to complete GE databases	SEC	8/24/16	9/15/16		
7.20	Deadline for counties to submit third-party GE databases	SEC	9/13/16	9/13/16		
7.21	Period for county testing and approval of GE database	County	9/04/16	9/19/16		
7.22	Period for SEC to send GE ballot proofs to commercial printer	SEC	9/04/16	9/19/16		

## Election Cycle Project Plan

7.23	Period for GE PEB, flash card, and voting machine prep and testing	County	9/04/16	10/04/16		
7.24	Deadline to deploy in-office ABS voting machines (In-office ABS opens 10/10/2016)	County	10/07/16	10/07/16		



## 5.2 Appendix B – 2014 Election Calendar

### 2014 Election Calendar

#### 2014 PRIMARIES AND GENERAL ELECTION

Calendar is based on current state and federal law. Efforts were made to ensure calendar complies with law. If in any case the calendar conflicts with state or federal law, those laws control. Calendar is subject to change.

Date	Event	Statutes
January 1, 2014	Absentee precincts established for elections in 2014	7-5-330
January 11	First day 17 year-olds who turn 18 on or before November 4, 2014, may register to vote	7-5-180
February 28	Deadline for county election commissions to submit Election Information Forms to State Election Commission (SEC)	
March 2	Date on which notice of filing must be published in newspaper of general circulation by county election commission	7-13-45
March 16 12:00 noon	Filing opens for party primary and convention candidates for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governor</li> <li>- Lieutenant Governor</li> <li>- Secretary of State</li> <li>- State Treasurer</li> <li>- Attorney General</li> <li>- Comptroller General</li> <li>- State Superintendent of Education</li> <li>- Adjutant General</li> <li>- Commissioner of Agriculture</li> <li>- U.S. Senate</li> <li>- U.S. Senate (to fill unexpired term)</li> <li>- U.S. House of Representatives</li> <li>- State House of Representatives</li> <li>- multi-county district offices</li> <li>- Solicitor (circuits 3, 5, 6, 12, 13, 15)</li> <li>- countywide and less than countywide offices</li> </ul> Candidates file Statement of Intention of Candidacy/Party Pledge (SICPP) and any filing fees with appropriate election commission (county or state)	7-11-15 7-11-210 7-11-220
March 30 12:00 noon	Filing closes	7-11-15
March 31	Deadline for political parties to hold county conventions	7-9-70
April 7 12:00 noon	Deadline for political parties holding primaries to certify candidates to appropriate election commission	7-11-15 7-13-40
April 11	Deadline to publish first public notice of primary in newspaper of general circulation in county	7-13-35
April 25	Deadline to publish second public notice of primary (must be published two weeks after first notice)	7-13-35
April 25	Deadline for county election commission to provide copies of each primary absentee ballot style to SEC	7-13-320(F)
April 26	Deadline to mail absentee ballots to UOCAVA voters (Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act)	7-15-405

## Election Cycle Project Plan

April 26	Deadline for political parties to submit list of prospective poll managers for primary to county election commission	7-13-72
May 10	Deadline to register to vote in June 10 Primaries	7-5-150
May 15	Deadline for political parties to hold state conventions	7-9-100
<b>June 10</b>	<b>Primary Election Day.</b> Polls open 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.	7-13-40 7-13-60
June 12 before 1:00 p.m.	Deadline for county election commission to hold provisional ballot hearing, canvass votes, and certify results. CEC should certify official results to SEC by 1:00 p.m., June 12.	7-17-510
June 14 Before 12:00 noon	Board of State Canvassers meets to canvass votes and declare results of primaries for federal, state and multi-county offices	7-17-510
June 16 12:00 noon	Deadline for filing protest of primary with appropriate county or state party executive committee	7-17-520 7-17-560
June 19	Protest hearings held by appropriate party executive committee	7-17-530 7-17-570
June 20 3:00 p.m.	Deadline for notice of appeal to the state party executive committee from decisions by county party executive committee	7-17-540
June 21 12:00 noon	Deadline for state party executive committee to hear appeals	7-17-550
June 24	<b>Primary Runoff</b> (if required) NOTE: Certification and protest procedures for runoffs follow same time frame as above.	7-13-40
July 15, 12:00 noon	Deadline to submit petition to appropriate election official for name to be placed on General Election ballot	7-13-351
August 15, 12:00 noon	a) Deadline to check petitions and certify petition candidates b) Deadline to certify referendum questions to the county election commission to be placed on General Election ballot c) Deadline for political parties to certify candidates to appropriate election commission d) Deadline for nonpartisan candidates to file and be certified for General Election ballot (actual filing deadlines for some non-partisan offices could differ according to local legislation)	7-13-350 7-13-351 7-13-352 7-13-355
September 5	Deadline to publish first public notice of General Election in newspaper of general circulation in county	7-13-35
September 15	Deadline for county election commission to provide copies of general election absentee ballot styles to SEC	7-13-320(F)
September 19	Deadline to publish second public notice of General Election (must be published two weeks after first notice)	7-13-35
September 20	Deadline to mail absentee ballots to UOCAVA voters (Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act)	7-15-406
October 4	Deadline to register to vote in General Election	7-5-150
November 4	<b>General Election Day</b>	7-13-10 7-13-60
November 5 7:00 p.m.	Deadline for county election commissions to transmit unofficial results to SEC	7-13-1160
November 7 1:00 p.m.	Deadline for county election commissions to hold provisional ballot hearing, canvass votes, and certify results. County election commissions should transmit official results to SEC by 1:00 p.m.	7-17-10 7-17-20
November 12 12:00 noon	Deadline for filing protests of county-level offices with county election commissions	7-17-30
November 14	Deadline for State Board of Canvassers to certify General Election results	7-17-220
November 17	Protest hearings held by county election commissions for countywide or less than countywide elections	7-17-50



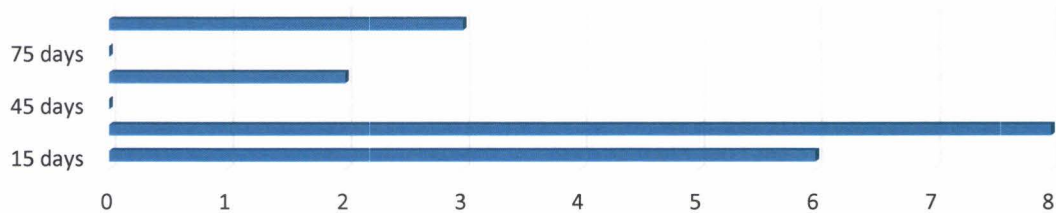
## Election Cycle Project Plan

November 19 12:00 noon	Latest possible date for protests of federal, state or multi-county offices to be filed with the State Board of Canvassers. Actual deadline is noon on the fifth day following State Board certification.	7-17-260
November 24 12:00 noon	a) Deadline to file appeal of county board decision to State Board. b) Deadline to submit transcript of protest hearing to the State Board.	7-17-60 7-17-50
December 8 12:00 noon	a) Latest possible date for State Board to hear appeals. Appeals must be heard not later than noon, Monday following filing of appeal. b) Latest possible date for State Board to hear protests of federal, state or multi-county offices. Protests must be heard not earlier than the fifth nor later than the 25th day following filing of protest.	7-17-70 7-17-270

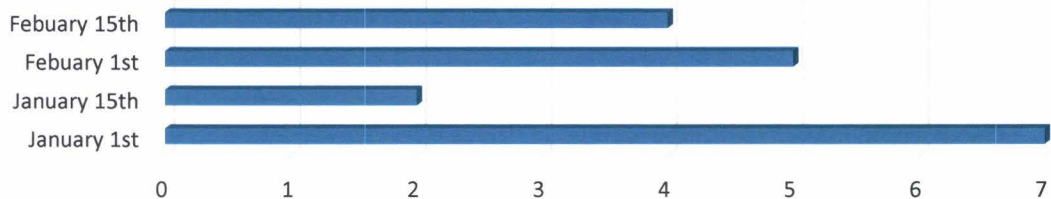


## 5.3 Appendix C – December 2014 County Survey Results

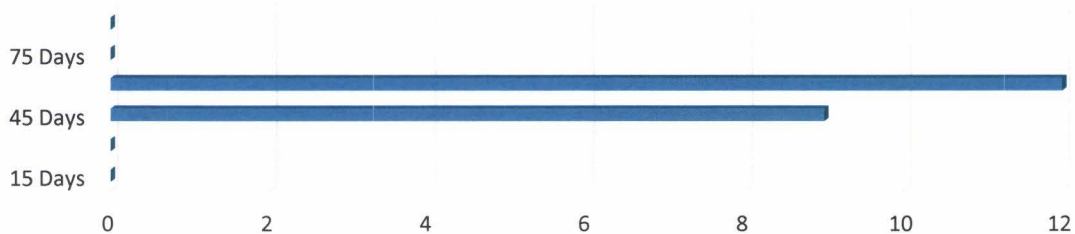
1. How many days in advance of an election/filing notice deadline do you need the SEC to provide the notice template so that you can make your edits, submit it to the paper, and have it published by the deadline?



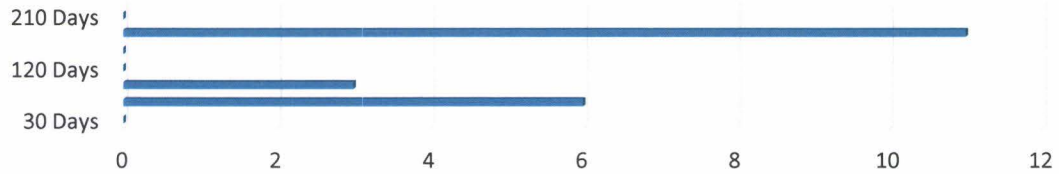
2. On what approximate date do you begin establishing local partisan offices in VREMS in preparation for March filing?



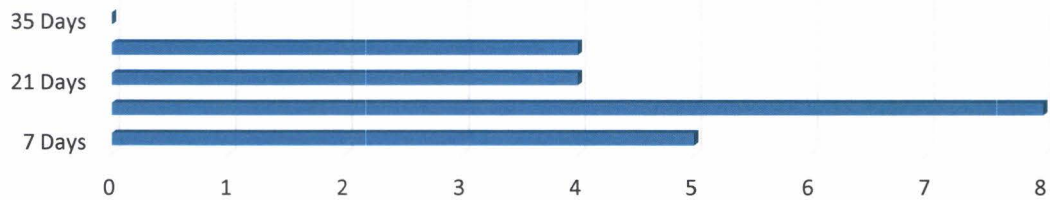
3. How many days prior to a statewide election do you begin to see a significant increase in VR applications (checking motor-voter, OVR queues on a daily basis)?



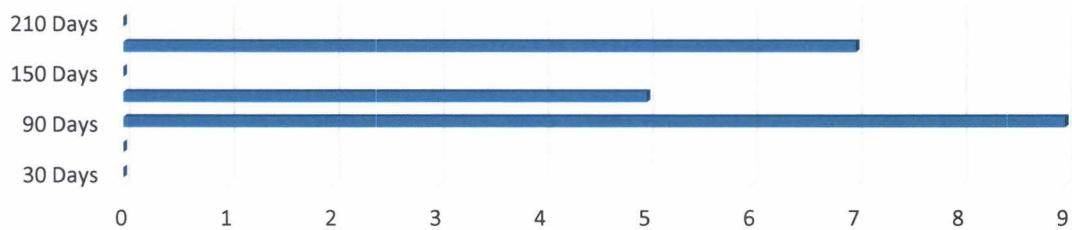
4. How many days in advance of a statewide election do you begin putting together generic absentee packages in preparation for absentee mailing?



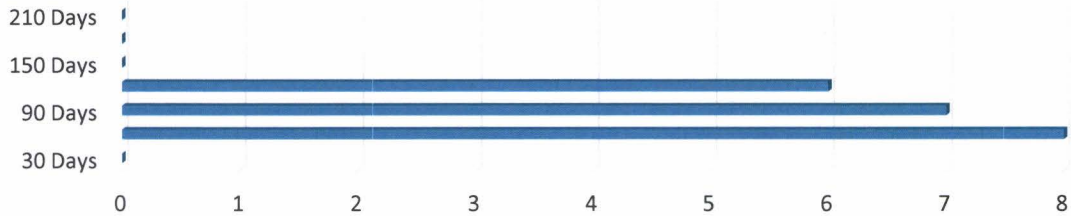
5. How many days in advance of a statewide election do you see a significant rise in in-person absentee voting requiring additional, temporary staff?



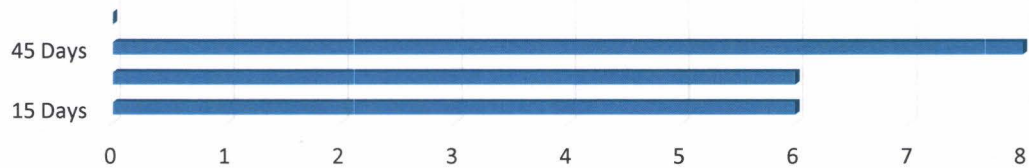
6. How many days prior to a statewide GE do you begin poll manager recruitment?



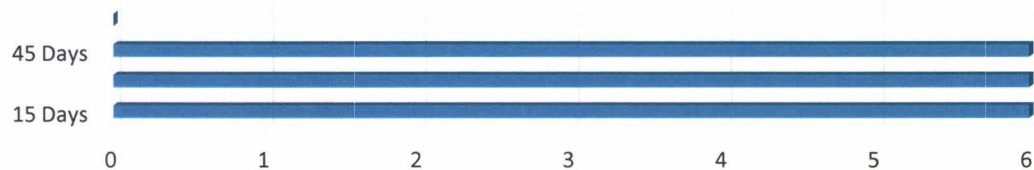
7. How many days in advance of a statewide election do you contact poll managers to verify their availability for Election Day?



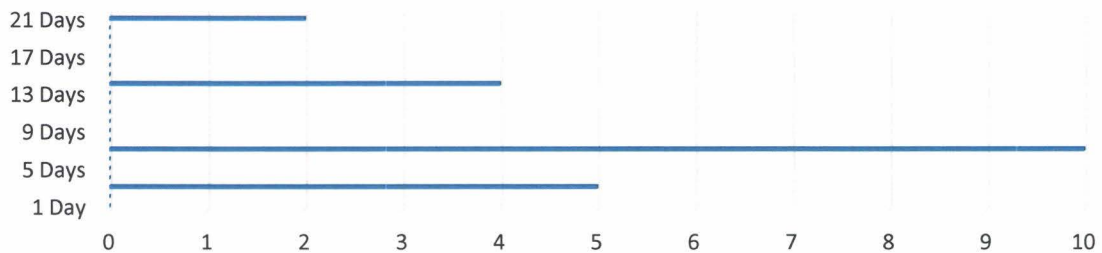
8. What is your target date (days before election) for completing poll manager recruitment?



9. How many days prior to a statewide election do you begin poll manager training?

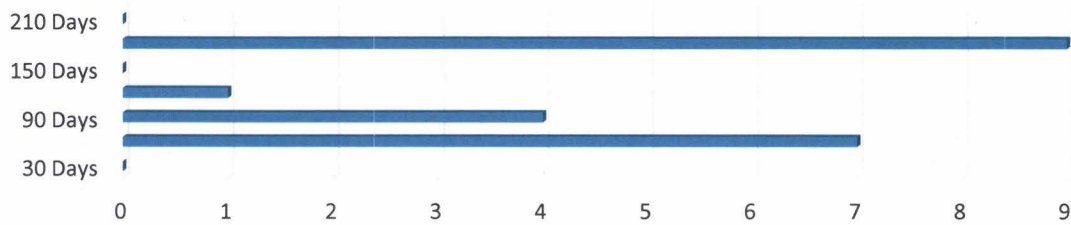


10. What is the latest date (days prior) you usually hold your last poll manager training?

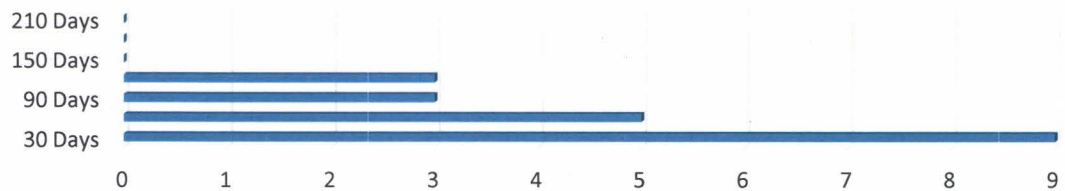




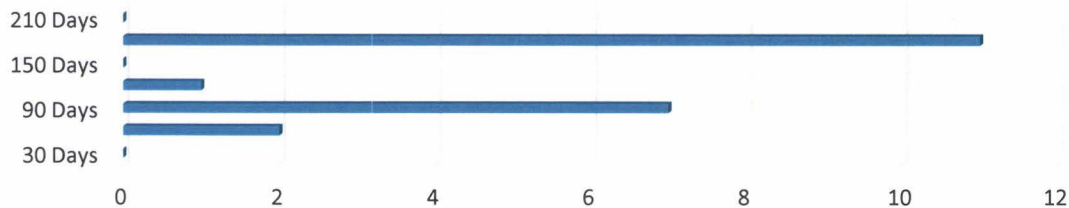
11. How many days prior to a statewide election do you begin verifying availability of polling places?



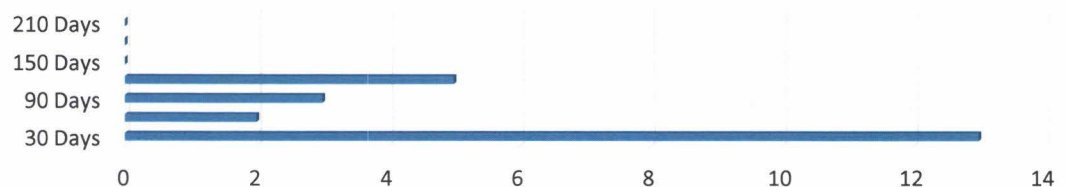
12. What is your deadline (days prior) for verifying availability of polling places?



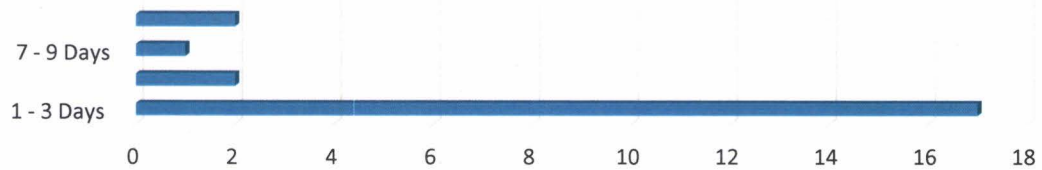
13. At what point in the election year do you begin verifying your decode?



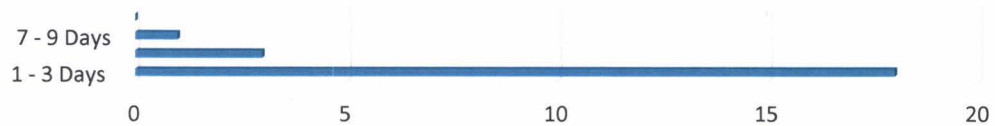
14. How many days prior to statewide election do you begin pre-database delivery maintenance of voting equipment (checking batteries, date/time, calibration, clear & test, compact paper, etc.)?



15. How many days prior to a statewide election do you distribute voting machines to polling places/poll managers?



16. How many days prior to a statewide election do you distribute polling place supplies to polling places/poll managers?



17. If you establish an additional absentee location, how many days prior to a statewide general election is it opened?

